

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 /065 W

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R 131420Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5596

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 00548

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW, PFOR, PINT

SUBJECT: THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE -- JANUARY 1976

REF: BONN 20703

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS TAKEN
THROUGHOUT THE PRECEDING YEAR HAVE BEEN INCONCLUSIVE,
THREE TRENDS ARE EVIDENT: (A) THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELEC-
TION WILL BE A CLOSE RACE, (B) THE CDU/CSU IS LIKELY TO
EMERGE AS THE LARGEST FRAKTION IN THE BUNDESTAG FOLLOW-
ING THE ELECTION, AND (C) IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THE
UNION PARTIES TO OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. IT
REMAINS UNCLEAR IF FOREIGN POLICY WILL BE A MAJOR ELEC-
TION ISSUE. HOWEVER, THE CDU/CSU IS PLANNING TO
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EMPHASIZE DEFENSE POLICY AND HAS CALLED FOR REJECTION

OF "A ONE-SIDED UNCONTROLLED POLICY OF DETENTE."
EFFORTS OF THE FDP TO CARVE OUT A SEPARATE ROLE FOR THE
LIBERAL PARTY WILL MAKE RELATIONS IN THE COALITION
TENSE OVER THE NEXT NINE MONTHS, BUT THERE IS LITTLE
LIKELIHOOD THAT THE FDP WOULD SWITCH COALITION PARTNERS
BEFORE THE ELECTION. THE WEST GERMANS WILL BE FOLLOWING
OUR ELECTIONS CLOSELY FOR ANY CHANGES IN US POLICY
TOWARDS EUROPE AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN THE FRG, AS ELECTION YEAR
1976 BEGINS, PRESENTS A DIVERSE PICTURE. SOME FACTORS
HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT OVER THE TWELVE MONTHS
OF 1975. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (REFTEL) HAVE BEEN INCON-
CLUSIVE BUT ALL POLLS INDICATE THAT THE ELECTION WILL BE
CLOSE, THE CDU/CSU IS LIKELY TO EMERGE THE LARGEST
FRAKTION IN THE BUNDESTAG, AND THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT
FOR THE UNION PARTIES TO OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.
PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ARE SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY ABOUT
THE GERMAN VOTERS' EXPECTATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY. THE
NEW YEAR'S ALLENSBACH POLL SHOWED THAT THE MAJORITY OF
THE POPULATION ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT 1976 ALTHOUGH THIS
POLL AND OTHERS INDICATE THAT THE GERMAN PUBLIC
EXPECTS CONTINUED HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT. IN SUM, THE
PUBLIC OPINION CRYSTAL BALL IS RATHER CLOUDY.

2. THE TRUCE BETWEEN THE CDU AND CSU AGREED UPON LAST
NOVEMBER BETWEEN KOHL AND STRAUSS REMAINS A NECESSARY
CONDITION FOR A GOOD UNION SHOWING NEXT OCTOBER. A
HALF-PAGE ADVERTISEMENT, WHICH APPEARED IN "DIE WELT"
JANUARY 8, REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR THE "AKTIONSGEMEIN-
SCHAFT VIERTE PARTEI" (ACTION GROUP FOURTH PARTY) AND
PLEDGING TO FIGHT ACROSS THE FRG FOR THE GOALS OF THE
CSU, CAUSED A STIR IN BONN. BOTH STRAUSS AND THE CDU
PRESS SPOKESMAN WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE
"VIERTE PARTEI" WAS IN NO WAY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CSU OR
FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS. THE FOUNDER OF THE "VIERTE PARTEI"
IS DIETRICH BAHNER, FORMER BAVARIAN FDP LAND CHAIRMAN.
THE "VIERTE PARTEI" APPEARS TO BE A GENUINE SPLINTER
GROUP AND NOT ASSOCIATED WITH THE CSU. IT IS NOT VERY
LIKELY THAT THE CSU WILL ATTEMPT TO FORM A FOURTH PARTY
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IN THE SHORT TIME REMAINING BETWEEN NOW AND THE OCTOBER
ELECTIONS.

3. OVER THE COURSE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IT WILL
BECOME CLEAR IF FOREIGN POLICY WILL, IN FACT, BE A
MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE. SOME OPPOSITION POLITICIANS
BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE
IN THIS AREA BECAUSE "OSTPOLITIK" HAS NOT DELIVERED WHAT

WAS PROMISED. THE UNCERTAIN POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE BUILD-UP OF SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH, THESE POLITICIANS ALSO BELIEVE, WORRY THE GERMAN VOTER ENOUGH THAT THE CDU/CSU COULD CAPITALIZE ON THE WIDE-SPREAD DESIRE FOR A CHANGE IN FOREIGN POLICY EMPHASES. SOME CDU POLITICIANS DISAGREE, HOWEVER, AND FEEL THAT THE LACK OF A UNITED FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT AMONG UNION POLITICIANS WOULD ENABLE THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TO USE A FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE TO THEIR OWN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 00548

POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. ON JANUARY 12, THE CDU ANNOUNCED THAT DEFENSE POLICY SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY AND

REJECTED A "ONE-SIDED UNCONTROLLED POLICY OF DETENTE."

4. FDP CHAIRMAN GENSCHER'S SPEECH AT THE TRADITIONAL THREE KINGS' DAY MEETING OF THE FDP IN STUTTGART WAS A HARBINGER OF LIBERAL ATTEMPTS TO CARVE OUT A SEPARATE POSITION FOR THEMSELVES IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN VIS-A-VIS BOTH THE CDU/CSU AND THE SPD. THESE EFFORTS WILL NOT IMPROVE THE RELATIONS WITHIN THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION IN BONN BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY IT IS VERY UNLIKELY THAT THE FDP WOULD SWITCH COALITION PARTNERS BEFORE THE ELECTION. IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPECTED THAT THE LIBERALS WILL ANNOUNCE THEIR INTENTIONS TO FORM ANOTHER COALITION WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AFTER THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS.

5. NEXT SPRING ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES WILL HOLD SPECIAL CONVENTIONS TO KICK OFF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. AT THE PRESENT TIME THESE MEETINGS ARE NOT EXPECTED TO PROVIDE VERY MANY SURPRISES BUT RATHER TO SERVE AS A MEANS OF BOOSTING THE MORALE OF THE PARTY FAITHFUL FOR THE STRUGGLE AHEAD.

6. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN COULD PLAY A ROLE IN THE GERMAN ELECTIONS. THE GERMANS WILL BE WATCHING THE U.S. CLOSELY FOR ANY CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY TOWARDS EUROPE IN GENERAL AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IN PARTICULAR (E.G., CALLS FOR UNILATERAL TROOP REDUCTIONS IN WEST GERMANY), DURING THE AMERICAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN.
HILLENBRAND

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